

Second Language Writing

Research insights for
the classroom

Edited by

Barbara Kroll

California State University, Northridge



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, United Kingdom
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1990

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1990
Sixth printing 1997

Printed in the United States of America

Typeset in Sabon

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Second language writing: research insights for the classroom / edited
by Barbara Kroll.

p. cm. – (Cambridge applied linguistics series)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-521-38383-8 (hardcover) ISBN 0-521-38778-7 (paperback)

1. English language – Study and teaching – Foreign speakers.

2. English language – Composition and exercises – Study and teaching.

I. Kroll, Barbara. II. Series.

PE1128.A2S33 1990

808'.042'07 – dc20

90-31067

CIP

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Second language writing: research insights for the classroom –
(Cambridge applied linguistics series)

1. Non-English speaking students. Curriculum subjects

1. Kroll, Barbara

808.04207

ISBN 0-521-38383-8 hardback

ISBN 0-521-38778-7 paperback

Contents

List of contributors	vii
Series editors' preface	viii
Preface	ix

<i>Introduction</i>	1
Barbara Kroll	

I PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING INSTRUCTION 7

Chapter 1	<i>Second language composition instruction: developments, issues, and directions in ESL</i>	11
	Tony Silva	
Chapter 2	<i>L1 composition theories: implications for developing theories of L2 composition</i>	24
	Ann M. Johns	
Chapter 3	<i>An overview of second language writing process research</i>	37
	Alexandra Rowe Krapels	
Chapter 4	<i>Coaching from the margins: issues in written response</i>	57
	Ilona Leki	
Chapter 5	<i>Second language writing: assessment issues</i>	69
	Liz Hamp-Lyons	
Chapter 6	<i>Reading–writing connections: toward a description for second language learners</i>	88
	Joan Carson Eisterhold	

II CONSIDERATIONS FOR WRITING
INSTRUCTION 103

- Chapter 7 *Composing in English: effects of a first language on writing in English as a second language* 109
Alexander Friedlander
- Chapter 8 *The teaching of topical structure analysis as a revision strategy for ESL writers* 126
Ulla Connor and Mary Farmer
- Chapter 9 *What does time buy? ESL student performance on home versus class compositions* 140
Barbara Kroll
- Chapter 10 *Feedback on compositions: teacher and student verbal reports* 155
Andrew D. Cohen and Marilda C. Cavalcanti
- Chapter 11 *Teacher response to student writing: focus on form versus content* 178
Ann K. Fathman and Elizabeth Whalley
- Chapter 12 *Responding to different topic types: a quantitative analysis from a contrastive rhetoric perspective* 191
Joy Reid
- Chapter 13 *Writing with others' words: using background reading text in academic compositions* 211
Cherry Campbell

Introduction

Barbara Kroll

Becoming a writer is a complex and ongoing process, and becoming a writing teacher is no less complex. A teacher's journey toward understanding the complexity of both writing and teaching often begins with a look to the past, for scholarship originates from the ability to synthesize past insights and apply them in the pursuit of continued inquiry. It is, therefore, encouraging to realize that a great deal about writing has been learned from studying how native speakers of English acquire skill in writing, knowledge gleaned from a field of study almost unknown in its modern sense a quarter of a century ago. A vigorous developing tradition of scholarship in composition and rhetoric has recently produced excellent bibliographical resource guides (e.g., Moran and Lunsford 1984; Lindemann 1987, 1988; Tate 1987) as well as in-depth reviews of scholarship (e.g., Hillocks 1986), guides to conducting research in the field (e.g., Myers 1985; Lauer and Asher 1988; Daiker and Morenberg 1990), and attempts to define the field of study itself (e.g., McClelland and Donovan 1985; North 1987).

The emergence of composition studies in the past quarter century as an area of professional emphasis within academic communities has also spurred on a tremendous metamorphosis in the teaching of writing, for composition teachers are now being schooled in ways unheard of before the late 1960s. As the eminent rhetorician Edward Corbett noted:

When I contrast the knowledge and competence commanded by my own graduate students and by the young teachers I hear talk at our conferences and conventions with the folklore and trial-by-error that I relied on when I was their age, I am duly humbled but simultaneously inspired. The enhanced professionalism of the young composition teachers is due, for the most part, to the formal training they have received in rhetoric and composition. (Corbett 1987: 445)

One result of such formal training has been a recognition of the dynamic nature of the teaching process itself and a fuller understanding on the part of writing teachers of how they must acquire the knowledge and skills that form the basis of many typical teacher training programs (Freeman 1989). Bartholomae (1986) sums up how best to

view those who teach writing: "What characterizes writing teachers, I think, is not that they have a set of 'methods' for the teaching of writing, but they have a commitment to writing as an intellectual activity and to what that activity can produce in the classroom" (p. 5).

For those engaged in teaching second language learners, what is needed is both a firm grounding in the theoretical issues of first and second language writing and an understanding of a broad range of pedagogical issues that shape classroom writing instruction. As teachers, we must realize that for those engaged in learning to write in a second language, the complexity of mastering writing skills is compounded both by the difficulties inherent in learning a second language and by the way in which first language literacy skills may transfer to or detract from the acquisition of second language skills.

In fact, while a background in first language writing may help inform the explorations of second language writing teachers and researchers, it should not be presumed that the act of writing in one's first language is the same as the act of writing in one's second language. For example, first and second language learners may not approach a writing task in the same way nor attend to feedback in the same way. What teachers need is an understanding of all facets of this complex field of writing, and then to filter that understanding through a prism that can reflect how the factor of using a nonnative code affects second language performance. Indeed, much work in second language research has replicated research conducted with native speakers, and the result is that the ways in which second language writing lessons are now often conducted derive in part from the attempt "to incorporate into our work much that is being discovered about language acquisition" itself (Raimes 1983: 543), as well as from a shifting paradigm within the field itself.

In English as a second language (ESL), an increased professional concern in the teaching of writing has perhaps most manifested itself at the annual TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) convention. At the TESOL conventions of the late 1970s, for example, there were less than half a dozen presentations on writing listed on the program each year, whereas the annual conventions starting in the mid-1980s and continuing to the present offer a multitude of workshops, demonstrations, papers, and colloquia on issues related to the teaching of writing and to research findings on the writing of nonnative speakers. Further evidence of increased professional concern is found in the proliferation of dissertations in the field of second language writing, while more articles are becoming available in professional journals. The authors of the chapters in this volume hereby join in the rich dialogue of inquiry we are engaged in today as we move forward to improve our students' abilities and our teaching powers.

Rationale and plan of the book

This book is addressed to those about to embark on the teaching of second language writing as well as to those already engaged in the field. Teachers are dedicated to fostering growth in writing by providing a sequence of lessons and courses designed to move students beyond their entering skill level, and by enabling students to acquire skills and strategies that are not only geared toward promoting success in an academic environment but are operable across a range of potential writing situations. Researchers want to investigate the questions that shed the greatest light on the problems of the field and contribute the most toward the development of a comprehensive theory of second language writing. The concerns of both these groups – teachers and researchers – are addressed in this book.

To accomplish their goals, teachers and researchers want to feel that they are functioning within a framework based on sound theoretical principles, and they also need to communicate clearly with each other. An awareness of the writer and the writing situation, and of the complex interactions between these two elements and with each emerging text, is essential as the writing teacher joins in the community of scholars conducting research in this field. So too, an awareness of classroom exigencies is essential for the researcher who explores the complex questions of writing performance. This book offers both a starting point for those seeking the training necessary for professional growth and a reference point for those already committed to the field.

This volume is divided into two sections. In the first section, six chapters present the current state of thinking on what the teaching of writing to nonnative speakers entails. Each of these chapters provides an overview perspective on one essential element in the total picture of second language writing instruction, providing insight into the evolution of second language writing instruction and the contributions to its understanding made by research in first language writing instruction. Rather than specifically addressing classroom materials or methods or even particular decisions made by writers or teachers, these chapters taken together will help teachers identify and understand what they must consider about the writing process and about the learner as they are designing programs, making curricular decisions, and planning individual lessons. These insights further help to identify the agenda for future classroom research, which can be conducted by the type of teacher-researcher Myers (1985) describes in his guidebook and which Zamel (1987) calls for in her review of writing instruction.

In the second section, seven chapters describe a variety of specific

studies, each focused on a different aspect of writing and/or the writing classroom, representing some kind of option for either the student writer or the teacher. These options might be viewed as constraints on the writer or teacher, constraints that have an impact both on composing behavior and on course design. Through an awareness of insights derived from such research studies, teachers can work to shape curriculum design and to guide their teaching decisions in a more principled fashion.

All of the chapters have been specifically prepared for this volume, jointly covering a range of the most important issues confronting second language writing teachers today. This volume should prove especially useful in providing a coherent view of current thinking in the field, and can serve as a guide for teachers and researchers seeking to formulate a comprehensive philosophy of teaching.

References

- Bartholomae, D. (1986). Words from afar. In A. R. Petrosky and D. Bartholomae (Eds.), *The teaching of writing*. Eighty-fifth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II (pp. 1–7). Chicago, Ill.: National Society for the Study of Education.
- Corbett, E.P.J. (1987). Teaching composition: Where we've been and where we're going. *College Composition and Communication*, 38, 444–452.
- Daiker, D. A., and Morenberg, M. (Eds.) (1990). *The writing researcher as teacher: Essays in theory and practice of class-based research*. Portsmouth, N. H.: Boynton/Cook Heinemann.
- Freeman, D. (1989). Teacher training, development, and decision making: A model of teaching and related strategies for language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 23, 27–45.
- Hillocks, G., Jr. (1986). *Research on written composition: New directions for teaching*. Urbana, Ill.: National Conference on Research in English and ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills.
- Lauer, J. M., and Asher, J. W. (1988). *Composition research: Empirical designs*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lindemann, E. (Ed.) (1987). *Longman bibliography of composition and rhetoric: 1984–1985*. New York: Longman.
- (Ed.) (1988). *Longman bibliography of composition and rhetoric: 1986*. New York: Longman.
- McClelland, B. W., and Donovan, T. R. (Eds.) (1985). *Perspectives on research and scholarship in composition*. New York: Modern Language Association.
- Moran, M., and Lunsford, R. (Eds.) (1984). *Research in composition and rhetoric*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.
- Myers, M. (1985). *The teacher-researcher: How to study writing in the classroom*. Urbana, Ill.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills and National Council of Teachers of English.

- North, S. M. (1987). *The making of knowledge in composition: Portrait of an emerging field*. Upper Montclair, N.J.: Boynton/Cook.
- Raimes, A. (1983). Tradition and revolution in ESL teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 17, 535–552.
- Tate, G. (Ed.) (1987). *Teaching composition: Twelve bibliographical essays*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press.
- Zamel, V. (1987). Recent research on writing pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly*, 21, 697–715.